United Nations S/2018/429

Security Council

Distr.: General
7 May 2018

Original: English

United Nations Support Mission in Libya

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report, submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2376 (2017), covers political and security developments in Libya, provides an overview of the human rights and humanitarian situation in the country and outlines the activities of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) since the issuance of my previous report on 12 February 2018 (S/2018/140).

II. Political and security-related developments

2. My Special Representative for Libya, Ghassan Salamé, continued his efforts under the United Nations action plan to support an inclusive political process to conclude the country's prolonged transition. Consultations continued between representatives of the House of Representatives and the High Council of State on forming a new executive authority to reach an agreement on limited amendments to the Libyan Political Agreement. In parallel, a series of meetings were held throughout the country to build momentum towards the national conference by encouraging dialogue and broad participation in the political process. The process is aimed at responding to the interest of Libyans in taking part in the political process and at providing a basis for solid participation in future electoral processes and acceptance of election results. Progress towards holding national parliamentary and presidential elections was made through the conclusion of the voter registration update, within Libya and abroad.

3. To support the political process, the United Nations continued to work with various communities to peacefully resolve the roots of their grievances through local reconciliation. These initiatives contributed to renewing contacts and reaching reconciliation agreements in southern and western Libya. Significantly, representatives of Misratah and Zintan progressed towards reconciliation, agreeing at the end of March on the need for a comprehensive national reconciliation and the peaceful transfer of power in Libya. They committed to working towards the unification of military and security institutions. With preparations proceeding for holding municipal elections during the course of 2018, mayors and heads of local councils representing all parts of the country convened for the second time since the start of the year. They urged the leadership of the House of Representatives and of the High Council of State to agree on establishing a new Government.

18-06813 (E) 100518

Please recycle

4. The overall security environment remained poor. Southern Libya witnessed an escalation of tensions in early March between militias from communities in conflict. Intermittent fighting in and around the city of Sabha continued to result in civilian casualties and the displacement of thousands of civilians. In Tripoli and its environs, a string of high-profile kidnappings occurred. Deadly bombing attacks on security checkpoints, including some for which the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) claimed responsibility, took place in central and eastern Libya.

Implementation of the Libyan Political Agreement

5. During the period under review, there was an increase in engagement between members of the House of Representatives and the High Council of State to agree on a potential mechanism for electing a new executive authority. In mid-February, 54 members of the High Council of State issued a statement calling on the House of Representatives to move forward on the process that had begun in September 2017. In response, in late March, 49 members of the House of Representatives called for closer collaboration between the two assemblies to agree on a new Presidency Council. Discussions started on a joint meeting between these substantial constituencies from both houses. Following an internal run-off election on 8 April, Khaled al-Meshri succeeded Abdulrahman al-Sweihli as the President of the High Council of State.

6. Progress was achieved on technical preparations for the holding of elections in 2018. The process for updating voter registration, which was launched on 6 December 2017 and concluded at the end of March 2018, resulted in the addition of about 1 million new registrants.

International and regional engagement

7. International and regional engagement continued to play a vital role in support of United Nations efforts to address the crisis in Libya. The African Union, the European Union and the United Nations task force continued efforts to address the issue of migration. The tripartite task force held several political and technical meetings during the reporting period. It undertook a joint assessment mission to Libya on 21 February to review progress in achieving the voluntary return of migrants and the evacuation of refugees and asylum seekers out of Libya. It also conducted a mission to Tripoli on 22 February, during which it visited a detention facility and met with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and other authorities. The task force encouraged the Government to close down the detention facilities and to improve the process for repatriation, including by ending the need for exit visas. It also created an operational cell in Tunis, which continued to meet regularly. Discussions are ongoing on the possibility of extending the mandate of the task force, which expires in May 2018.

8. Notable achievements of the task force include the return of 11,859 migrants to 29 countries of origin between 28 November 2017 and 14 April 2018, through the Voluntary Humanitarian Returns programme of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), with the support of the African Union, the European Union and the Government of Libya.

9. On 15 March, UNSMIL and IOM participated in the sixth ministerial coordination platform on Sahel strategies, hosted by the Government of Chad in N'Djamena. The forum discussed the impact of the situation in Libya on the situation in the Sahel for the first time. On 3 April in Niamey, Chad, Libya, the Niger and the Sudan agreed to establish a mechanism of cooperation in the areas of border security and the fight against transnational organized crime.

10. My Special Representative attended the meeting of the Ad Hoc High-Level Committee on Libya in Addis Ababa held on 17 April, which provided an opportunity

to renew the African Union-United Nations partnership on issues concerning Libya. In addition, on 30 April the Quartet on Libya convened its fifth meeting at the League of Arab States headquarters in Cairo. The four organizations of the Quartet — the African Union, the European Union, the League of Arab States and the United Nations — discussed the situation in the country and renewed their support for the United Nations action plan.

Situation in the western region

11. The security situation in the western region remained precarious during the reporting period, with bouts of localized low-level conflict between rival armed groups. On 21 February, members of the Special Deterrence Force militia raided the Sahara Bank in Warshafanah with the aim of allegedly arresting criminal gang members. During the course of the raid, indiscriminate fire by the Force led to the killing of the group's commander and at least four civilian casualties. Clashes between the Force and the armed group continued in the area for two days, which caused a portion of the coastal road into Warshafanah to be blocked for a limited period. The coastal road connecting Warshafanah to the centre of the capital, and the area close to Tripoli International Airport, is now secured by the special operations forces, which are under the control of the Presidency Council's commander of the western military region. On 2 May, ISIL claimed responsibility for an attack on the High Commission for National Elections in Tripoli, in which more than 15 people were killed.

12. There were continued reports of theft, carjackings, attacks and kidnappings during the reporting period. Several high-profile kidnappings occurred. On 14 March, the convoy of the President of the High Council of State was attacked in the Qawalish district while en route from Gharyan to Yafran; two members of the convoy were injured. UNSMIL condemned the attack, rejecting the use of violence to reach political objectives. On 15 March, the military prosecutor general, Brigadier General Masoud Erhuma, was seized by unknown armed groups in Tripoli. On 28 March, Central Tripoli Mayor Abdel-Raouf Beitalmal was kidnapped from the Old City of Tripoli by a brigade aligned with the Ministry of Interior, but was later released.

13. Small, contained popular protests also occurred during the reporting period. On 10 March, a demonstration took place at Tripoli's Algeria Square to demand an improvement in living conditions and accountability for officials accused of financial corruption. On 30 March, Referendum First, a consortium of non-governmental organizations and other civil society organizations, formed the "30 March" movement and held demonstrations in Martyrs' Square in Tripoli, making political and economic demands.

Situation in the eastern region

14. In Darnah, the siege by the Libyan National Army continued, adversely affecting the delivery of humanitarian assistance and access to adequate health care. Increased shelling and use of heavy artillery by the Libyan National Army was reported on several occasions in March, targeting the eastern parts of the city and injuring several civilians. On 4 March, two civilians were injured, reportedly from shelling by the Army. Subsequent Army activities and retaliatory attacks by the Darnah Mujahedeen Shura Council on 8, 11 and 19 March resulted in two people being killed and nine others injured from both sides. On numerous occasions, the Army publicly announced that it would launch a military offensive in Darnah, which had yet to materialize.

Situation in the southern region

15. During the period under review, intercommunal conflict increased in and around the city of Sabha between tribal armed groups and militias. The Libyan National Army moved military equipment into the area. On 6 March, after weeks of periodic clashes, violence escalated in Sabha between armed groups from the Tebu and the Awlad Sulayman communities. During the month of March, clashes resulted in seven persons being killed and more than 20 injured, most of whom were civilians. Approximately 720 families were displaced. By early April, more than 1,500 families in total had been displaced as a result of the fighting.

16. On 17 February, the Libyan National Army issued an ultimatum to foreign armed groups present in the Libyan territories to depart to their countries, threatening to resort to force by air and land. On 23 March, the Army deployed new forces and armoured vehicles to the Tamanhint airbase (approximately 30 km north of Sabha) and to the Birak al-Shati' airbase (100 km northwest of Sabha) to further enhance its presence in the region.

17. On 16 March, 16 suspected members of the Nusrah Front were arrested in Kufrah after having reportedly entered Libya from the Sudan. On 24 March, two individuals reportedly affiliated with Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb were killed in Awbari city in a drone strike carried out by forces of the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) in coordination with the Government of National Accord.

Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in Libya

18. The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant continued activities around its former stronghold of Sirte, as well as in other areas of Libya. On 21 February, ISIL claimed responsibility for a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device which detonated at a Libyan National Army checkpoint on the road leading to the city of Jufrah. As a result, five Army members were killed and seven injured. Five suspected ISIL members were arrested on 3 March by the Special Deterrence Force in Qasr al-Qarahbulli and Zlitan. Subsequently, publicized statements suggested that ISIL sleeper cells existed in Tripoli and surrounding areas. On 9 March south of Ajdabiya, a suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive device targeted an Army checkpoint (gate 60), injuring three of its members. Similarly, on 29 March in Ajdabiya, a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device detonated at the eastern security gate manned by the Army, resulting in 6 of its members being killed and 10 others injured, including a civilian. In both incidents, media reports stated that ISIL had claimed responsibility.

19. On 2 April, anti-terrorism forces intercepted an ISIL convoy of six armed vehicles, reportedly seizing two of the vehicles while the other four escaped in an area between Zlitan and Bani Walid. On 2 April the Presidency Council launched a military operation against ISIL in the area stretching from Misratah in the east, Bani Walid in the south, Tarhunah and Msallata in the west, and Khums and Zlitan in the north.

Economic situation

20. During the reporting period, oil production was sustained at more than 1 million barrels per day, which in combination with higher international oil prices increased optimism about the country's economic outlook. Nonetheless, efforts to further increase oil production were hampered by insufficient financial resources for maintenance and investment in oil facilities and by blockades by armed militias and local communities. The El Feel oil field in the south-west remains closed, despite ongoing negotiations between representatives of the National Oil Corporation and

remnant forces of the Petroleum Facilities Guards over delays in salary payments, resulting in substantial financial losses.

21. Four months into the new fiscal year, Libyan authorities have still not agreed on the budget framework for 2018. Deliberations continue on raising total expenditures from the proposal of 42.5 billion Libyan dinars (about $31.8 billion), as compared with the 2017 budget proposal of 37.5 billion Libyan dinars (about $28 billion). Despite optimistic projections for oil revenues, the excessive public expenditures would generate a fiscal deficit of over 10 billion Libyan dinars (about $7.5 billion). The budget process stalled as a result of an outstanding agreement by the Central Bank of Libya to finance the fiscal deficit through withdrawals from foreign reserves and efforts to integrate the public expenditures of the "interim Government" in the East.

22. Following a sudden gain in value on the parallel market in January, the Libyan dinar depreciated to 6.25 Libyan dinars to 1 United States dollar as of 5 April, compared with the official exchange rate of about 1.39 Libyan dinars to 1 United States dollar. However, the value of the Libyan dinar on the black market stabilized at around 6.00–6.60 Libyan dinars to 1 United States dollar.

23. To overcome the liquidity crisis, Libyan women adopted coping strategies, such as selling jewellery, using savings and relying on social networks. However, women continued to face difficulties in sustaining and operating small and medium-sized enterprises, owing mainly to high production costs and reduced purchasing power.

24. The relative improvement in macroeconomic stability has been offset by emerging reports alleging rampant mismanagement of public funds. For instance, in reports of 13 March, the Office of the Attorney General charged that illegal fuel smuggling over the past three years had generated an estimated $750 million. Other reports indicated that corruption related to the issuing of letters of credit had contributed to the financing of armed militia groups.

III. Constitution-making process

25. Efforts to establish a constitutional framework for the end of the country's transitional period continued. On 14 February, the Supreme Court established a legal principle which will facilitate the end to litigation against the Constitution Drafting Assembly filed in administrative courts, thereby effectively removing the legal obstacles to a national referendum on the constiiutional proposal endorsed on 29 July 2017. Members of the House of Representatives started to discuss the legislation necessary for a referendum. The Constitution Drafting Assembly has since increased outreach activity on the constitutional proposal and engaged with other key Libyan institutions to promote the holding of a referendum ahead of parliamentary and presidential elections.

IV. Other activities of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya

A. Electoral support

26. UNSMIL and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) continued to provide advice and support to the High Commission for National Elections and other Libyan counterparts. Following the conduct of the voter registration update exercise by the High Commission, the total number of registered Libyans reached

2,434,654, of which 1,033,777 were women and 6,630 belonged to the out-of-country electorate.

27. Efforts have been focused on supporting the High Commission in enhancing its preparedness for future balloting events by providing advice and assistance in the areas of general management, data management, training and procedures, nomination of candidates and political entities, logistics and field operations, including backstopping support from headquarters. In addition, some technical assistance and support is also being provided to the Central Committee for Municipal Council Elections in its preparations for the 2018 local elections.

28. Three working groups, established in October 2017 by UNSMIL, led efforts to provide electoral assistance with a view to coordinating international support for voter registration, public outreach and electoral legislation. Further to a series of workshops held with international experts in January and February 2018, three sets of recommendations were developed in support of a referendum on a draft constitution, as well as a legal framework for presidential and parliamentary elections. The first two-day workshop was held beginning on 29 March with members of the legislative committee of the House of Representatives to promote discussions on referendum legislation.

29. In close consultation with the High Commission for National Elections and UNSMIL, the UNDP electoral assistance project entitled "Promoting elections for the people of Libya" finalized its workplan and started the implementation of its activities in Libya. The project received contributions of almost $10 million from the European Union, France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

30. On 7 March, UNSMIL received a request from the Central Committee for Municipal Council Elections to provide support in the 2018 municipal council elections. In 2018, 75 of the 92 municipal councils that were elected in 2014 and 2015 will reach the end of their four-year-mandates. In the light of the municipal elections due to be held in Zawiya on 28 April, UNSMIL supported the Central Committee with outreach efforts during the reporting period and approved continued support through the development of a project on local elections, through UNDP, to be signed soon.

B. Human rights, transitional justice and the rule of law

31. During the period under review, all parties to the conflict committed violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.

32. Ongoing fighting continued to claim civilian casualties. During the reporting period, UNSMIL documented a total of 43 civilian casualties: 16 deaths, including 3 children, and 27 persons injured, including 9 children. Leading causes of casualties among civilians included explosive remnants of war, gunfire, shelling and vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices.

33. Civilians bore the brunt of intermittent clashes in southern Libya between the Awlad Sulayman and the Tebu tribal armed groups and their allies. The use of indiscriminate fire in densely populated areas led to civilian casualties, while snipers also apparently targeted civilians and civilian vehicles. Victims included civilians of Arab, Tebu and Tuareg origin. An estimated 1,500 families were displaced as a result of fighting, finding shelter in schools or with relatives and host communities in the towns of Awbari and Murzuq, as well as in Sabha neighbourhoods farther away from the conflict zones.

34. The Libyan National Army continued to impose restrictions on the freedom of movement of Darnah residents and on the entry into the city of certain prohibited goods, such as petrol, as well as humanitarian aid, such as medical supplies.

Abduction and unlawful deprivation of liberty

35. Armed groups on all sides continued to take hostages or to otherwise unlawfully deprive civilians, including children, of their liberty. Civilians were targeted for financial or political gain, on the basis of their tribal origin or family identity, or for their perceived political affiliations and opinions.

36. During the reporting period, Tripoli witnessed a rise in unlawful deprivations of liberty of government officials and other high-profile figures. The fate and whereabouts of the military prosecutor general, Masoud Erhouma, his driver and his security guard remain unknown following their disappearance from Tripoli on 15 March. On 17 March, unidentified gunmen in Tripoli took another member of the judiciary hostage. He was released three days later without charges or referral to judicial bodies.

37. On 20 March, Jumaa al-Usta, the former owner of the al-Assema television channel, which was closed down in 2014, together with three of his brothers, was taken from his home by armed men affiliated with the Tripoli Revolutionary Brigade. While his brothers were released after a few hours, Jumaa al-Usta was detained until 26 March at a location controlled by the Brigade.

Detention and torture

38. Across the country, arbitrary detention and torture continued to be widespread in both prisons and detention facilities, with 6,400 individuals held in 26 official prisons under the Ministry of Justice, and an estimated 75 to 80 per cent of whom were being held in pretrial detention. Thousands of others were held in facilities nominally under the control of the Ministry of Interior or the Ministry of Defence, as well as facilities directly run by armed groups. Those held had little opportunity to challenge the legality of their detention or seek redress for violations suffered.

39. UNSMIL conducted eight visits to prisons and detention facilities in western Libya, including in Gharyan, Misratah, Tarhunah and Tripoli. Despite repeated requests, UNSMIL has not been able to visit the Mitiga detention facility, which is controlled by the Special Deterrence Force and where an estimated 2,600 people are allegedly held, most without charge or trial. On 28 February and 29 March, UNSMIL was not permitted to interview male and female detainees in private at a detention facility controlled by the Central Security/Abu Salim armed group.

40. In relation to detention facilities, UNSMIL continued to receive credible reports of prolonged and arbitrary detention, torture and other ill-treatment, enforced disappearance, poor detention conditions, medical neglect and the denial of visits from families and lawyers. During the reporting period, UNSMIL gathered credible information on torture and other ill-treatment at a number of official prisons, including Ayn Zarah, Jawwiyah, Judaydah and Kuwayfiah prisons. Torture was also documented in detention facilities operated by the Special Deterrence Force, the Tripoli Revolutionary Brigade, the Central Security/Abu Salim brigade, the Nawasi and Fursan Janzur armed groups in Tripoli and the central branch of the Criminal Investigations Department (previously known as the Department for Combating Crime) in Misratah.

41. In one notable example, the Special Deterrence Force continued to detain a married couple and their three children, aged between 2 and 5 years, who were seized from Zlitan on 3 February. The father appeared in a video recording posted on the

Facebook page of the Special Deterrence Force on 2 March "confessing" to having carried out terrorist acts.

42. In eastern Libya, UNSMIL documented that medical professionals, both women and men, over the age of 70 are among those held in the Gernada and Kuwayfiah prisons, or directly by armed groups allied to the Libyan National Army on account of their family links to the Benghazi Revolutionaries Shura Council and their allies or their alleged lack of support for the Libyan National Army.

Groups in vulnerable situations

Migrants

43. Migrants, including children, continued to be vulnerable to unlawful deprivation of liberty and arbitrary detention in official and unofficial places of detention, torture, abduction for ransom, extortion, forced labour and unlawful killing. Perpetrators included State officials, armed groups, smugglers, traffickers and criminal gangs.

44. During the reporting period, UNSMIL visited three detention centres overseen by the Department for Combating Illegal Migration. Detained migrants were held in substandard conditions, characterized by overcrowding and poor lighting and ventilation. In some detention centres, detainees had no or limited access to sunlight and the outdoors, and were denied communication with their families. Detainees, including survivors of trafficking and rape, were exposed to further violations and were not provided with adequate access to legal aid, medical care, and mental health or psychosocial support.

45. On 14 March, the head of investigations in the Office of the General Prosecutor announced that 205 arrest warrants had been issued in relation to smuggling and abuse against migrants. No further details were made available.

Women and girls

46. Women and girls were arbitrarily detained, at times on the basis of their family affiliation or for "moral crimes," such as engaging in consensual sexual relations outside of wedlock. Many were held in facilities without female guards, heightening the risk of sexual abuse. Women were strip-searched by or in front of male guards and some were subjected to intrusive cavity searches. Migrant women and girls were particularly vulnerable to rape, forced prostitution and other forms of sexual violence at the hands of State officials, members of armed groups, smugglers and traffickers. The situation in the Judaydah Women's Prison deteriorated during the reporting period. During inspections of prisoner cells by the Special Deterrence Force, which has been in charge of securing the prison's perimeter since November 2017, Force members beat women, including with water pipes and the backs of rifles, and placed them in solitary confinement for prolonged periods. UNSMIL is also concerned about reports indicating that the acting prison director, a judicial police officer, is directly involved in the beating of detainees.

Transitional justice and national reconciliation

47. UNSMIL continued supporting national reconciliation through a comprehensive and inclusive programme, with assistance provided by the Peacebuilding Fund and UNDP. In early February, delegations from Ghadamis and the Tuareg communities displaced in Awal met for the first time since the displacement of members of the Tuareg community from Ghadamis. They agreed on a road map for reconciliation in Ghadamis, which included measures to document human rights violations committed during the conflict and to evaluate the destruction of properties and houses, with the goal of ensuring future accountability and reparations mechanisms. Two follow-up

committees were established to supervise and monitor the implementation of the road map.

48. On 21 February, representatives from the Tebu and Zway tribes of Kufrah District signed a reconciliation agreement after a two-day meeting in Tunis. The agreement sets out key principles for reconciliation, including freedom of movement, individual accountability for crimes and equal access to services without discrimination. The Tebu and Zway tribes agreed to form a high commission for peace and reconciliation in Kufrah which, once established, will receive technical support from UNSMIL.

49. On 14 March, technical experts and representatives of the Institution for the Care of Families of Martyrs and Missing Persons, the Ministries of Justice, Interior and Social Affairs, the Office of the Attorney General, families and civil society organizations agreed on a set of recommendations to address the issue of the filing of missing persons cases as a cornerstone for national reconciliation in Libya. Participants discussed ways to establish a national body on missing persons and to ensure the independence of such a body from any political or institutional divisions. They also requested more technical and financial support from specialized international organizations, the majority of such organizations having withdrawn from Libya in 2014.

50. UNSMIL continued to engage with the Misratah and Tawurgha' communities. The return of the displaced members of the Tawurgha' community, estimated at around 40,000 people, continued to be blocked by armed groups from Misratah, despite the announcement by the Presidency Council that they would be able to begin to return to their city on 1 February. An estimated 450 families who attempted to return on 1 February remain at a makeshift desert camp in Qararat al-Katif and in temporary accommodations in the town of Harawah, under difficult living conditions. On 27 March, the technical committee of the "Towards national reconciliation" project, supported by UNSMIL and composed of members of both communities and the Minister of State for Internally Displaced Persons Affairs, agreed on an eight-point plan to end the deadlock over the implementation of the agreement between Misratah and Tawurgha' on returns and reparations signed on 31 August 2016. The plan included a renewed commitment to comply with the Misratah-Tawurgha' agreement and called on the Presidency Council to put in place security measures to enable the return of those who had been forcibly displaced.

51. At the national level, the preparatory committee for national reconciliation, established by a decree of the Presidency Council on 14 May 2017, has yet to be activated. The national reparations fund for all conflict-related victims since 2011, decreed in October 2017, has also not been formed.

Judicial and penal system

52. Prosecutors, judges and other judicial staff continued to operate in a difficult security environment. Following the 15 March abduction of the military prosecutor general, military prosecutors organized a protest against attacks targeting members of the judiciary and called on the Presidency Council and UNSMIL to secure his release.

53. During the reporting period, the Office of the General Prosecutor reportedly agreed to establish a court inside the Mitiga detention complex, which is controlled by the Special Deterrence Force, amid concerns about the possible impact of such a move on the independence of the judiciary and fair trial guarantees. Plans are under way to reopen a facility for detained children in Tripoli, under the Ministry of Social Affairs. Children in Libya continued to be detained together with the adult prison population.

54. Violations of international human rights and humanitarian law were carried out with continued impunity. Despite regular announcements of investigations into allegations of war crimes and other violations by the Presidency Council and the Libyan National Army, no member of an armed group was brought to justice for committing crimes under international law, to the best of the Mission's knowledge. In one recent example, on 1 January a detainee held at the Ayn Zarah (B) prison reportedly died as a result of torture following a hunger strike by detainees protesting detention conditions and delays in the judicial process. No official was held to account pending investigations in relation to this incident.

55. The exact legal status and whereabouts of a field commander with the special forces under the Libyan National Army, Mahmoud al-Werfalli, who is subject to an arrest warrant issued on 15 August 2017 by the International Criminal Court for the crime of murder for his alleged involvement in summary executions, remain unclear.

56. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in cooperation with an Algerian school for penitentiary management, organized a two-month in-depth training in Algeria for 13 members of the Libyan judicial police, which concluded in February. The training took place under the UNODC regional prison project to strengthen prison management and foster the social reintegration of offenders. While encouraging South-South cooperation through this approach, UNODC received an official request from the Libyan judicial police to continue its support for the reform of prison systems in Libya in partnership with Algeria.

Human rights due diligence policy

57. The United Nations system in Libya continued its efforts towards the implementation of the United Nations human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces (A/67/775-S/2013/110, annex). UNSMIL and the United Nations country team are currently reviewing their support for Libyan security forces, with a view to mitigating identified risks of grave violations of international humanitarian law, human rights law or refugee law being committed by recipients of United Nations support.

58. A risk assessment and mitigating measures with respect to United Nations support for the Department for Combating Illegal Migration are currently under consideration.

C. Security sector

Support for Libyan planning for interim security arrangements

59. UNSMIL continued efforts to support the creation of more cohesive and unified Libyan security institutions that are responsive to civilian control. On an institutional level, UNSMIL and UNDP formally launched the Policing and Security Programme with the Ministers of Interior and Justice. As part of the process to professionalize the police, 1,500 police officers for Tripoli were selected to participate in a training-of-trainers programme. The Mission is also supporting efforts by the Ministry of Interior to engage with armed groups in Tripoli who are nominally a part of the ministry to progressively strengthen its authority. These efforts complement efforts to operationalize the greater Tripoli joint operation centre.

60. Nevertheless, efforts to strengthen institutional capacity are becoming more complicated as a result of ongoing competition between security actors. A case in point was the Presidency Council's appointment on 13 March of the new Tripoli military zone commander, Major General Abdul Abdul Basset, who, while favourable to the Tripoli armed groups, is viewed with suspicion by those in Zintan, including

the commander of the western military zone, Major General Juweili, who sent a force into Tripoli in March to take over strategic points on the coastal road west of Tripoli, heightening tensions.

61. UNSMIL increasingly engaged with actors beyond Tripoli. At the end of March, a series of meetings were held with security actors in the eastern region, including the police in Benghazi, as a first step towards engaging the Policing and Security Programme and the model police station in the east. The Mission also continued to engage with the Presidential Guard and the counter-terrorism unit set up by the Government of National Accord.

62. From 19 to 21 March, the Government of Egypt convened the sixth Libyan military unification meeting in Cairo. The meeting included delegations of military representatives appointed by both Prime Minister Serraj and Libyan National Army General Haftar. Meeting participants intended to finalize a draft agreement and work out implementation mechanisms. However, although there was general agreement on the need for the army to be under civilian control, there were several outstanding disagreements on the roles and responsibilities of senior positions, as well as opposition from security actors who were not involved in the talks.

Arms and ammunition management

63. The uncontrolled proliferation of arms and ammunition remains a threat to stability and security in Libya. In collaboration with the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), UNSMIL continued to assist Libyan authorities in their efforts to address threats posed by arms and ammunition stockpiles, and contamination by explosive hazards as a result of conflict. In Misratah, UNMAS completed a project for the clearance and destruction of 200 tons of explosive remnants of war. The second phase of the project, for the clearance and destruction of an additional 200 tons, commenced in February.

64. In order to assist the national security organizations in addressing the increased threat from improvised explosive devices, during the reporting period UNMAS completed the development of technical operating procedures for high-threat search and high-risk disposal.

65. The national standards for mine action, developed in support of the Libyan Mine Action Centre, are now in force. For the first time in four years, UNSMIL and UNMAS were able to celebrate the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action on 4 April in Libya, at an event organized by the Libyan Mine Action Centre.

D. Women's empowerment

66. Since the launch of the United Nations action plan, UNSMIL has strongly encouraged the meaningful participation of women, including in conservative communities, during its discussions on next steps in the political transition process. Dedicated efforts were undertaken to ensure the participation of women during the preparatory process leading up to the national conference. On International Women's Day on 8 March, my Special Representative addressed more than 250 women and encouraged stronger representation of women in leadership positions and in governance structures.

67. Recruitment commenced for the new Women's Support and Empowerment Unit, which is to be located within the Presidency Council. Once operational, the Unit will be the focal point for promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women in Libya. With funding from the Governments of Germany, the Netherlands and

Switzerland, UNSMIL, in cooperation with UNDP, facilitated the participation of five Libyan women from civil society organizations and academia at the sixty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women, held in New York in March 2018. Two side events were organized on the margin of the session, in cooperation with United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the delegation of the European Union and the Permanent Mission of Finland.

E. Young people, peace and security

68. During the reporting period, 180 Libyan youth participated in a series of workshops promoting "positive peace", organized by the United Nations Children's Fund through the Voluntary Humanitarian Returns programme of IOM and the Institute for Economics and Peace, through funding from the Government of Italy. Participants were asked to think about and develop innovative community development projects that reflect the values of positive peace, including not only the absence of violence but also a set of attitudes, structures and institutions that underpin and sustain peaceful societies. Participants returned to their communities and were encouraged to start campaigning to overcome adversity and conflict, and to build lasting peace.

F. Coordination and international assistance

69. Consultations continued on the United Nations strategic framework for the period 2019–2020, which will be finalized in due course. Ahead of the planned meeting in May or June of the Senior Policy Committee, which is the overarching body of the coordination framework for international technical cooperation with the Government of Libya, UNSMIL and the Ministry of Planning co-chaired a meeting in Tripoli on 27 March. The meeting stressed the importance of advance work on finalizing respective national priorities by sectoral working groups.

G. Humanitarian, stabilization and development assistance

70. The humanitarian situation remained fragile, with protracted political conflict and economic hardship. Periodic escalations of armed conflict resulted in small-scale displacements, while support for return movements remains hampered by a lack of systematic access for humanitarian actors.

71. The Libya Humanitarian Response Plan for 2018 remains poorly funded, with only 2 percent of the required $313 million, imperilling lifesaving and basic assistance for more than 1 million of the most vulnerable Libyans and risking an increase of community tensions as interventions to improve access to basic services are undermined. Increasing respect for international humanitarian law and human rights law remains a key priority, which requires the implementation of a wide range of protection interventions for all vulnerable groups.

72. There were over 704,000 migrants in Libya, including women (11 per cent of identified migrants) and children (10 per cent), nearly half of whom came from Chad, Egypt and the Niger. Between 1 January and 3 April, 6,161 migrants arrived in Italy from Libya. During the same period, 3,479 migrants were returned to the shores of Libya by the Libyan Coast Guard, of which 1,410 were returned during the reporting period. There were 359 deaths by sea registered on the central Mediterranean route. Almost all migrants who were returned received direct emergency assistance from IOM and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

(UNHCR). By 3 April, IOM had assisted with the voluntary repatriation of 5,240 migrants to 28 countries of origin since the beginning of 2018.

73. There are 51,519 refugees and asylum seekers registered with UNHCR in Libya. Since the beginning of 2018, UNHCR has registered 6,860 individuals, of which 2,462 were registered in the month of March alone, mostly Syrians, followed by Palestinians and Sudanese. This represents a 70 per cent increase compared with the same period during the previous year. The vast majority of these registered refugees and asylum seekers are not in detention in Libya but could face the risk of detention and arbitrary arrest in the prevailing environment in the country.

74. Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers continued to be subjected to arbitrary detention. There are currently an estimated 4,440 migrants in detention, of which 2,000 are refugees and asylum seekers. This figure refers to the individuals detained in official facilities and does not include detention centres maintained by militias. In March, the Libyan authorities reported the closure of 18 detention centres. The United Nations continues to call for the closure of detention centres and the respect of human rights for those who are detained.

75. United Nations agencies, including IOM, UNFPA, UNHCR and the World Health Organization (WHO), provided assistance, including protection screenings, medical psychosocial assistance and non-food items. They continued to improve living conditions to minimum standards through long-term interventions. IOM facilitated the release of 3,012 migrants from detention centres and supported the establishment of medical clinics in four detention centres. United Nations agencies provided medical assistance and material support to migrants and refugees who had been detained. UNHCR and implementing partners also undertook more than 335 monitoring visits to detention centres throughout Libya. In 2018, over 980 refugees were released from detention following advocacy by UNHCR. A large majority of the persons released were individuals who were evacuated to the emergency transit mechanism in the Niger and to Italy.

76. In response to the blocked return of the Tawurgha' community in early February, the humanitarian community provided assistance related to water, sanitation and hygiene, health, food and shelter to the internally displaced persons; however, protection concerns and needs remain. Demining teams have not been able to assess the contamination by explosive remnants of war in Tawurgha', owing mainly to lack of access. An accurate assessment of the extent of the contamination is important in preparation for a safe and dignified return. In response to the escalation of conflict in and around the southern city of Sabha, the humanitarian community provided health and food assistance, hygiene items and non-food items to the families.

77. WHO and UNFPA also supported the training of nurses and midwives from the rural area of Takinse in eastern Libya. UNFPA and the Bureau of Statistics and Census trained 154 Libyan enumerators on methodological framework and data collection tools in preparation of the forthcoming multisectoral Libyan household survey, which will cover 7,000 households (including those of non-displaced and internally displaced persons, and returnees) in various cities, notably Benghazi, Sabha and Sirte. This exercise will provide data on the impact of the crisis on the Libyan people, their priority needs and their coping strategies. Thus far in 2018, the World Food Programme has also distributed food to 65,488 people in need, primarily internally displaced persons, including 3,000 members of the Tawurgha' community.

78. Despite the fragile political and security situation, the UNDP Stabilization Facility for Libya delivered results in all regions of the country, extending the reach of the Government to citizens across Libya. By the end of the reporting period, the programme had received contributions amounting to $51.7 million, including $5 million from the Government of National Accord. The programme contributed to

the rehabilitation and equipping of hospitals, including prefabricated medical centres, and delivered 14 ambulances. Sixteen schools were rehabilitated or re-equipped and municipalities benefited from rehabilitation and re-equipping, along with improvements to the performance of electrical substations, water pumping stations and the sewerage system.

79. In the south, IOM continued to provide support to Sabha by starting the process of procuring olive seedlings to promote farmers' livelihoods and providing support to the Water and Waste Water Company of Sabha with essential water, sanitation and hygiene services to conflict-affected communities. IOM also finalized the construction of a wastewater tank in Tadamun, a marginalized neighbourhood of Sabha, which hosts 2,500 internally displaced persons and has suffered for years from wastewater leakages. In addition, IOM handed over the rehabilitated primary health-care unit in Al-Manshiyyah to the local health office in Sabha to support improved health services. UNDP is working with municipalities to strengthen the service delivery capacity of local authorities through the provision of equipment and the rehabilitation of public infrastructure in six municipalities: Bani Walid, Benghazi, Sabha, Kufrah, Sabratah and Tripoli.

80. During the reporting period, many United Nations agencies, funds and programmes reassigned their duty stations from Tunis to Tripoli and employed new staff. As of March 2018, United Nations coordination meetings were being held primarily in Tripoli.

V. Deployment of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya and security arrangements

81. Following the lifting of the evacuation status for Libya on 7 February, the presence and activities of the United Nations continued to gradually expand in Libya, including to locations outside Tripoli, particularly to Benghazi, where the United Nations intends to establish an office in the near future. United Nations agencies also finalized agreements with UNSMIL on the use of common premises.

Security and safety of staff members and operations

82. United Nations personnel in Libya continued to work in a high-risk security environment. Restrictions continued to be imposed on the movement of personnel in the country and on international staff travelling by air to Tripoli and other destinations within Libya.

VI. Observations

83. I welcome the progress made on the principal elements of the United Nations action plan aimed at facilitating the conclusion of the protracted transition in Libya.

84. I am encouraged by the high turnout in the recently completed voter registration update as a strong indication of a popular desire by the people of Libya to participate in electoral processes. The United Nations remains committed to continuing to support the electoral process. I reiterate the importance of creating a conducive environment for the holding of elections, including by putting in place an appropriate legal framework. In this regard, I urge the House of Representatives, in consultation with the High Council of State, to finalize the necessary electoral legislation expeditiously. I underline the importance of establishing a constitutional framework in order to provide the necessary architecture for the elections, end parallel institutions and establish a clear governance structure to end the transitional period.

85. I welcome the launch of the national conference process, with a multitude of events hosted across Libya. These meetings are a vital catalyst to encourage Libyan citizens to come forward and have their thoughts and opinions reflected in the public sphere. These efforts are fundamental to the re-establishment of a unified national polity. The meetings will prepare for a large national conference event later in the year and contribute towards a conducive environment for elections.

86. I welcome the progress made in different community reconciliation initiatives led by Libyan actors across the country. The reconciliation dialogue processes contribute to strengthening national unity in Libya and knitting together its social fabric. These Libyan-led efforts are crucial in alleviating tensions and averting further conflict through dialogue about the root causes of the differences between communities. The United Nations remains committed to providing support through the Peacebuilding Fund project. I express my gratitude to the donors who enable such support to continue.

87. I note positively the direct engagement between the House of Representatives and the High Council of State to agree on a mechanism to form a new executive authority. An inclusive and representative executive authority remains an important body for improving the daily conditions of the Libyan people, preparing for national elections and encouraging participation and acceptance of the election results.

88. It remains essential that all members of the displaced communities be able to return to their places of origin in a voluntary, safe and dignified manner. I commend the efforts made by my Special Representative to address the process of return for the Tawurgha' community. The return of this community and all others displaced since 2011 should not be delayed any further. I stress the importance of Libyan ownership of this issue and encourage the further efforts of the Government of National Accord to proactively work to implement reconciliation initiatives capable of allowing the return of the displaced.

89. Continued and active participation of Libyan women in key political and reconciliation processes is an encouraging sign of the advancement of gender equality and the participation of women in political life. I continue to urge all Libyan political, social and economic actors to engage fully to ensure the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

90. I am encouraged by the significant decrease in civilian casualties since the start of the year; however, I remain concerned about the insecurity in areas across Libya. I am dismayed at the repeated escalation of tensions and violence in and around the city of Sabha in particular, which has resulted in the loss of life and displacement of thousands of civilians. I call on all parties to respect international law, cease all acts of violence and commit to dialogue to address the root causes of grievances. While there are also growing concerns about the alleged presence and activities of ISIL and other terrorist groups in the south, I underline the urgent need to establish the rule of law in the area to ensure the cessation of hostilities among the warring factions and introduce more effective border control. I am also concerned by the high-profile kidnapping incidents, mainly in Tripoli, that occurred during the reporting period. The widespread proliferation of arms in the country also needs to be addressed owing to the threat they pose to law and order and to the extension of State authority. Reforming and unifying the military and security forces of Libya under civilian leadership is critical for the country's stabilization.

91. I note the important role of Libyan municipalities in delivering services at the local level and welcome efforts to hold municipal elections during 2018. The United Nations stands ready to provide further support as necessary to both endeavours.

92. I am concerned by the deteriorating humanitarian situation across parts of Libya. I am grateful to Member States for their contributions to the Libya Stabilization Fund and encourage further funding for the Libya Humanitarian Response Plan, which is aimed at supporting 1.1 million people in need.

93. I remain concerned by the ongoing human rights violations and abuses in detention, and prolonged arbitrary detention without due process. Such violations harm attempts to create a stable Libya that abides by the rule of law. Authorities must prioritize the release of all men, women and children detained arbitrarily, provide humane treatment and conditions for those detained lawfully and ensure that all are afforded due process rights. Releasing those unlawfully detained would enhance reconciliation efforts, while at the same time it would solve practical problems faced by the penitentiary system. I also encourage Libyan authorities to fully cooperate with the International Criminal Court, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1970 (2011), to help bring about justice and accountability for crimes under international law in Libya.

94. I am deeply disturbed by the continuing reports of human trafficking in Libya. I encourage the Libyan authorities to spare no effort to identify and prosecute those responsible for such heinous crimes. I call on all actors to cooperate with and support the efforts of the Libyan authorities to bring perpetrators to justice. The plight of migrants and the abuses they suffer in Libya and as they attempt to cross the Mediterranean continue to call for joint, concerted and urgent action. I am hopeful that the recently established African Union, European Union and United Nations task force will help to address the issue of migration in a comprehensive manner. I commend recent efforts by countries of origin to address the plight of their citizens. I also commend countries that have agreed to host migrants who are unable to return to their countries of origin and are in need of asylum. Nevertheless, more needs to be done and more resettlement spaces need to be made available for vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers.

95. The unity of the international community in supporting a peaceful resolution to the Libyan crisis remains critical. In the months ahead, there is an opportunity to be seized of the best interests of the Libyan people. I therefore urge continued, positive collaboration with the United Nations to end the country's protracted transitional period and work together to establish new unified institutions based on the principles of democracy and the rule of law. I wish to express my gratitude for the strong support that Member States have shown to my Special Representative and to the important role of regional organizations and our Quartet partners. I encourage them to ensure that the United Nations is able to maintain the momentum generated over the past few months.

96. I wish to reiterate my sincere appreciation to the Government of Nepal for providing the personnel of the United Nations Guard Unit. I also wish to express my gratitude to my Special Representative for Libya, Ghassan Salamé, and to the staff of the United Nations system in Libya for their dedication and hard work in support of a peaceful end to the transition in Libya and the establishment of stable and effective governance that responds to the legitimate aspirations of the Libyan people.